



**DOWNTOWN
AKRON**
VISION + REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
>>PHASE 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, Downtown Akron Partnership and the City of Akron embarked on the development of a long range plan for downtown for the first time in DAP's history. From the beginning, the plan was supported by Mayor Dan Horrigan, whose Blue Ribbon Task Force saw the need for such a plan. It was also a primary recommendation from DAP's strategic planning process that took place last year.

The Mayor and his staff joined with DAP's leadership in assembling a multidisciplinary group of 37 representatives from small and corporate business, development, city and county government, health systems, non-profits, finance, education, housing, tourism, real estate and philanthropy to populate the committee.

DAP contracted with nationally-recognized consultants MKSK of Columbus to lead Phase I of the Downtown Vision and Redevelopment Plan, which was supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and GAR Foundation.

The first phase of the process integrated more than 150 citizens and stakeholders in a five month collective decision-making planning process. It evaluated existing conditions as well as plans and processes that have been undertaken that intersect with the downtown neighborhood. Through the process, ten planning principles were identified to be prioritized and integrated into future public or private developments. Many of these principles are now paired with workgroups charged with leading the full development and integration of the principle into the way Downtown Akron does business. Finally, the process identified five key opportunity sites for development and provided recommendations for each to catalyze growth. Of the five sites identified, The Lock 3 & 4 area and Main & Exchange were prioritized as the most critical and catalytic areas to begin work.

Phase II of the plan, which will involve broad community engagement, is already being discussed.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dan Horrigan
Mayor, City of Akron

Christine Mayer
President, GAR
Foundation

Kyle Kutuchief
Akron Program Director,
The John S. & James L.
Knight Foundation

Suzie Graham
President & CEO,
Downtown Akron
Partnership

Margo Sommerville
Vice President, City
Council, City of Akron

Annie McFadden
Deputy Chief of Staff,
City of Akron

Jason Segedy
Director of Planning &
Urban Development,
City of Akron

Jason Dodson
Chief of Staff, County
Executive, County of
Summit

Gregory Mencer
Development Manager,
Development Finance
Authority of
Summit County

Dan Rice
President & CEO, Ohio &
Erie Canalway Coalition

Nicole Mullet
Executive Director,
ArtsNow

Gregg Mervis
President & CEO, Akron-
Summit Convention &
Visitors Bureau

Srini Venkatesh
Chief Science Officer, VP
of Science & Technology
GOJO Industries

Jennifer Fox
VP, Director of Client &
Community Relations,
PNC Bank

Gary Rickel
Vice President, C.B.
Richard Ellis

Joel Testa
President, Testa
Companies

Tony Troppe
Principal, The Everett
Group

Halle Jones Capers
Sr. VP of Operations
and Manager of
Transportation, G.
Stephens, INC.

Dave Lieberth
Principal, Lieberth
Consulting Group

Julie Wesel
CEO, Chemstress,
Consultant Company

Ryan Pritt
Co-Founder, President,
Pritt Entertainment
Group

Tim Ziga
Associate General
Counsel, Akron
Children's Hospital

Steve Abdenour
Vice President,
Operations, Cleveland
Clinic/Akron General

Benjamin Sutton
Sr. VP, Strategy &
Performance, Summa
Health System

David James
Superintendent, Akron
Public Schools

Tobin Buckner
Akron Entrepreneur
Community Manager,
JumpStart

Richard Enty
Executive Director,
METRO RTA

Tony O'Leary
Executive Director,
Akron Metropolitan
Housing Authority

Cory Kendrick
Director of Population
Health, Summit County
Public Health

Katie Wright
Co-Founder, Metis
Construction

Sarah Benn
Performing Artist,
Shivering Timbers

Frank Williams
President, Akron
Fraternal Order of Police

Brian Moore
Partner, Roetzel &
Andress

Dan Colantone
President & CEO, Greater
Akron Chamber

Howard Parr
Executive Director,
Akron Civic Theatre

John Garafalo
Vice President,
Community Investment,
Akron Community
Foundation

Patrick Kelly
Director of Economic
Development,
FirstEnergy Utilities,
FirstEnergy

PHASE 1 PROCESS

TASK 1 UNDERSTANDING + VISION MONTHS 1+2

- Site tour
- Existing conditions analysis and plan review
- Stakeholder interviews

TASK 2 OPPORTUNITY / IDENTIFICATION MONTHS 2+3

- Catalog existing planned improvements and future opportunities
- Identify near and long-term opportunities

ESTABLISH CONSENSUS

TASK 3 PLANNING / FRAMEWORK MONTHS 4+5

- Downtown Akron planning framework
- Priorities and demonstration projects
- Next step recommendations
- Internalize/prioritize recommendations and position next steps

PLANNING PRINCIPLES + RECOMMENDATIONS

1 The focus is Main Street

- Concentrate resources, incentives, and attention on Main Street
- Focus efforts to establish the Lock 3 area as the epicenter of the city, serving as a catalyst for spurring development
- Activate the spaces and buildings along Main Street through both temporary and long-term interventions
- Improve lighting on Main Street

2 Vitality starts with residential

- Conduct a housing market study to validate demand, housing typologies, price points and to make the case for incentives
- Improve incentives for additive residential development downtown
- Repurpose/renovate older buildings for residential as an appropriate early strategy
- Encourage mixed use development and preserve first floor/corners for retail uses

3 Address business vacancy

- Convert older office buildings into residential, mixed use opportunities
- Reserve developable areas for future new office development as market demand evolves
- Focus on partnerships to kick-start projects (on Main Street)

4 Create a coordinated incentive package

- Explore establishing a property tax abatement program for residential renovation/development in the downtown core
- Review current TIF revenue/% of income tax strategies to incentivize new office development
- Create an economic development plan to maximize available financing tools to Akron's advantage
- Support the completion of Targeted Loan Fund as a unique financing tool

5 Make great public spaces

- Design public spaces that embrace the nature of the city and serve all people
- Implement TIGER Grant to establish streetscape standards, extending on-street parking, improved pedestrian environment, and bike lanes/connection to Towpath
- Establish high aesthetic standards on Main Street and enhance outdoor seating/dining
- Ensure that ALL new development (residential, commercial, retail, garages) creates public spaces and ground floor uses that activate streets and make downtown more livable
- Implement a coordinated wayfinding system to navigate downtown

6 Continue to program downtown

- Continue to diversify programming to reach multiple audiences
- Coordinate marketing from programming organizations to promote brand and experience
- Identify partnerships to strengthen communication of events to target audiences - workforce, students, residents
- Encourage participation in the downtown environment

7 Prioritize street design that enhances health and safety

- Implement complete streets, creating safer pedestrian, vehicular and cyclist connections
- Preserve street grid and break down super blocks
- Maintain State Street connection
- Right-size the scale of downtown streets
- Calm traffic on High and Broadway
- Support conversion of Exchange Street and continue to research conversion of other one-way streets

8 Expand on successful nodes of activity

- Create/advance plans for improving areas like Lock 3 & 4, Exchange & Main, Maiden Lane and Northside
- Work to add mix of uses in these nodes to provide more consistent activity on a daily basis

9 Build on Akron's rich history

- Incorporate Akron's history into projects both formally and whimsically
- Claim the brands and history that are fundamentally Akron and reflect them downtown

10 Strengthen downtown connections with surrounding neighborhoods and institutions

- Strengthen two way connections between The University of Akron and downtown
- Build on previous planning efforts to make corridors inviting to surrounding neighborhoods and share the strengths of each area
- Conduct full downtown master plan study to identify connections, infill, and catalytic opportunities to expand and connect downtown with its surroundings

OPPORTUNITY SITES

